Notes on Self-Control
Especially for Young Men

THE DIFFICULT COMMANDMENT

BY

C. C. MARTINDALE, S.J.

A TRULY helpful book on the study of sex psychology. The author shows a profound knowledge of his subject and discusses with much penetration, lucidity and candour the difficult problem of control of the sexual instinct. It is refreshing to find among so many nauseously sentimental books on the subject, one which treats of sex matters with reverence and elevation, being, moreover, enlightening and constructive. Human nature needs intellectual and psychologic help as well as physical and spiritual, and these pages aim at inducing an intelligent understanding of difficulties encountered in the attainment of self-control.

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PREFACE

CATHOLICS are taught that it is gravely wrong to take deliberate pleasure, outside marriage, in sexual thoughts or desires, and still more so, to perform sexual acts whether alone or with others. They are also taught that within marriage (a state that is not being spoken of, save incidentally, in this book) they must be faithful to their wife or husband, even in thought or desire, and that there are also misuses of the married relationship which are gravely wrong. Experience shows that this doctrine, which is implicit in the Sixth Commandment, "Thou shalt not commit adultery," creates practical problems, and even theoretical ones, to many—especially young men—who loyally admit the Catholic teaching on the matter and would wish to act according to it. They often feel that they *can't* act up to it, and they often don't see clearly *why* any such teaching is given. It doesn't seem sensible.

To start with, the subject is very seldom thrashed out as other subjects are. It is fairly easy to hold instruction-classes, or to promote study-circles, or to give lectures, dealing with any subject save this one. In schools there is, I know, a tendency to give franker instruction nowadays, to older boys especially, than was the fashion even a few years ago. But this is a difficult matter. Personally, I could not feel willing to give detailed collective instruction in class. For though I welcome simplicity and hate prudery, a simple-minded speaker needs, if he is not to do harm, a simple-minded audience. And this he rarely gets, even among the young. Boys are always self-conscious and wondering what the others are thinking. Also, they will talk about it afterwards, and there are always some boys of lower moral sense who will like to tell smaller boys, or lewd-minded boys, or just the inquisitive, what they have heard. This is less likely to happen when the instruction is given in a really friendly and personal way to an individual. His sense of honour and the knowledge that he is being trusted are aroused. But then, few older men in a school are able to enter into quite such intimate terms with many of the boys: especially an official,

whether the head-master or another, can seldom know and deal with each individual as he ought to be dealt with. For no two boys ought to be talked to in quite the same way. If it be said that a boy's father is the right person to give such instruction, that may be so; but the fact remains that most fathers are much too shy of their sons to embark on any such business, and also sons would often much resent their fathers speaking to them about this. Besides, even grown-up men are not necessarily very wise, nor have they always thought this (or any) matter out: their advice would often be very vague and usually confined to statements concerning exterior processes and warnings about disease and dangers (which are often depressing and even inaccurate, as when a boy is terrified by being told that bad actions—which he is not taught *how* to stop—will send him mad if he does *not* stop them); and anything to do with the strictly moral or spiritual side of the matter will be regarded by a layman, all too easily, as a confessional-monopoly.

On his side, a priest in a confessional is often in a difficult situation. The confessional is amazingly impersonal, while this topic is, as I said, to be treated very personally in-

deed. Again, he has for principle that in this department he ought to say "less rather than more." Further, he has little option in the matter, as he cannot hold up the next penitents indefinitely—partly because it is hard on them, partly because if he keeps a man a long time it suggests to everyone else that the man has a lot to say. Finally, a man who *has* a lot to say and requires real help, will probably go to confession but seldom, *e.g.*, on the eve of a great feast, precisely when the confessional is crowded; besides, such an one will be only too anxious to get out without having had too much said to him.

The fact remains that the enormous majority of boys, to return to them for a moment, pick up their information haphazard: from other boys, from cheap magazines, plays, "health-books," of which we know not a single one that is properly written from a Catholic standpoint. There are nauseously sentimental ones, and would-be bluff common-sense ones, and inaccurate religious ones, and usually demoralizing more-or-less Freudian ones; and even foreign Catholic ones would demand recasting before they would suit an English taste. How then *can* most of our boys act? Only a small percent-

age has the least chance of being instructed properly at school—nearly all save one social class leave far too young. These are certain, you may say, to pick up their information "in the street." On the whole, I believe that the best system in the concrete is to give as firm a religious training in general, especially in the use of the sacraments, as possible; to begin to instruct the mind as to self-control in general, with simple applications to the sex instinct (and frank replies to sincere questions, in private), and to try fully to instruct it later on. For one cannot guard against all dangers nor keep boys (or girls, for that matter) in glass cases; but one *can* help a growing boy at any rate to have as well-informed and as sensible a mind about this topic as about any other, and to develop his views about sex as accurately as about his job, and this sort of thing will probably have to happen after school. So this book is not meant for schoolboys, nor yet for grown-up men primarily, but on the whole for young men from seventeen upwards.

Personally, I think that the topic is usually dealt with either from the physical side merely, or from the spiritual side merely, and not enough from what may be rather pomp-

ously called the psychological side. I mean, boys are told to get up directly they wake: not to lie on their backs; to take a cold bath, etc., etc. That has its uses; still, there are plenty of boys who are quite healthy, who play a sound game of football; plenty of young men who keep themselves tough in spite of the difficulties of, say, a sedentary life like a clerk's, who yet from time to time may go through absolute misery owing to their sexual "temptations." Or again, they get told to "go to the sacraments"; to pray to Our Lady; and that too is good. But there are thousands who are really earnest at their prayers and do go to the sacraments, and yet who cannot succeed in living as they should and really want to. At most, a sort of negative psychological advice is given—"Try not to think about it: don't get into occasions of sin." But anyhow, mere negative advice is never a very good way of dealing with anything; and, there are many to whom the whole of life is one recurrent occasion of sin, owing, for example, to the conversation and behaviour of their companions in a factory, office, or club. They cannot become hermits: they have to earn a living and to go in for ordinary social intercourse and recreation.

There is apt to be, in the mind of such a man, a sort of cleavage between "what I'm told I ought to think," and, "what I *do* think," or, "what I find to be practically possible." Now there is nothing like a clear mind for enabling a man to get his motives strong. If I am muddled about the means of achieving a thing, let alone about the thing itself, I find it far harder to tackle the matter. Human creatures need intellectual and psychological help as well as physical and spiritual.

In the following pages, I have tried to start by clearing the ground—getting rid of a certain number of confused ideas that may haunt the back of a man's mind: then, to proceed from what an average man, just *as* man, naturally and from experience will admit as true, and thus gradually to move towards the more spiritual and finally the quite supernatural ideals, motives and sanctions. Thus I trust to have been faithful at once to the full Christian revelation, and yet intelligently sympathetic with all that is in human nature as such and in the concrete—that is, devoid of those preternatural succours which God would wish us to have and that we would have were we not, as we are, a fallen race. And I wish to say not one word that sounds

official or merely conventional. I know that in many matters it is best to start from some universal principle, or divinely revealed truth, and to argue downwards to the concrete: but in this very personal matter I think it is almost essential to start with the concrete, with ordinary experience, and to work up, thus, towards the only fully satisfying thing, namely the eternal truths, and the Law of God as shown in Jesus Christ.

I may add that only after obtaining a great deal of advice from persons whom I could not possibly neglect, have I resolved to publish these notes at all, and in this form. That *a* book is needed, I have long been quite convinced: whether this is the sort of needed book, I naturally dare not say, and cannot judge. It remains that men constantly ask: "Why was I not told all this long ago?" so that silence (especially now that these topics are everywhere discussed) would not seem to be the best policy: they say, "For heaven's sake don't fool me by telling me to take cold baths and play games: form my mind for me," so that merely physical advice is seen to be often useless: and again, "Don't please just tell me to pray. I can't" (or else, "I do"). So that spiritual advice alone, may

be inadequate. Besides, non-Catholics or agnostics are often just as anxious about this business as Catholics are, and require to have the best done for them that *can* be done in the circumstances. Nor do I believe in the "blackthorn method," which I have heard recommended. Men are by no means as a rule just rebellious, but often are frightened, or miserable. And if any method has clearly failed, it is that one. Finally, there is not the slightest chance of the Catholic law concerning artificial birth-restriction being observed, unless men have got accustomed to happy self-control from boyhood up. So with real humility, yet unable to pretend that these notes have not been dictated by experience, I offer them in this form, having tried to write not one word academically, nor one word uninspired by true human sympathy, nor one word that lowers the Catholic and divine doctrine and ideal.

Many readers of Edition 1 have found p. 4 inadequate. One school-master (a layman) writes: "If all the boys are told everything, as here, in their first or second term, no secret is left, not even an open one: hence none exist to be mysteriously imparted from boy to boy." Also, they get the facts right,

and no harmful myths or mistakes can be suggested. There is much in this; add, that we have found that very good boys often discover sexual pleasure by accident (accidents connected with the gym, for example, or even cycling), and just because they *are* good, do not suspect there can be anything wrong about it. *Thus habits are formed without guilt even at their inception*, and it is these that, grown unbreakable later on, provoke the cry: "If only I had been told!" My private opinion might be that a boy should have all that concerns himself explained to him when he is quite small, *not* from the religious or even ethical end, or with the minimum of religious sanction introduced; and the rest when he goes to his secondary or public school or even earlier, again on the most common-sense basis. At the *same time*, as I add on p. 75, he should be trained to think of religion in "heroic" terms all round, so that "of course" he wants to be ready and even anxious to suffer something for, and with, Our Lord, and to be "fit all through" to associate with Mary and to serve her.

It has been frequently remarked that this book contains nothing for girls. It was not intended to, and I do not believe that one

book suitable both for young men and young girls could be written; nor could it be written by the same person. Women should write for girls. I hasten however to say that a book for girls has now been published ("Into Their Company," by a Medical Woman. Third Impression. B.O. & W.: 1s. and 2s.). I have not elaborated here what suits little boys (such as how to instruct them, alluded to above), nor yet what suits married men, especially in regard of contraception. It has been planned to write a further, less colloquial book, for such older men. *Nos cum prole pia benedicat Virgo Maria.*

C.C.M.

I.

I WISH first to clear up some points which often, I find, remain confused, and cause thus an unhealthy back-to-the-mind in many a man.

i. You are a man, and not an angel, and you never will be. I mean, you are partly body. You are not just a soul. You are not even a spirit with a body unfortunately attached to it as though by a string. When you die, your body crumbles into dust, but that is not what God intends its eternal state to be. I will not discuss what the Church means by a "glorified" body, but the point is, you will once more be body-soul as you are now—*man*. For eternity you will be a man, not an angel, not a mere mind. You have not, therefore, however good you are, to try to feel, or even to act, as though you had no body. You will always have to reckon with it, and to please God in it. You sometimes read in prayer books that you ought to aim at "angelical purity," or that a Saint was an "angel" of

purity: but these are metaphors, and if they lead you to suppose that it is your bad luck that you have a body, and to wish that you could do without it, you had better not use such prayers, for they would be in your case misleading, and indeed few persons can use them quite sincerely. The fact is, that you are man: and a man is body-soul, and whatever arrangements you make for managing your life, and whatever your hopes and ambitions may be, you will always have to reckon with being flesh as well as spirit. So do not start out with any false idea that you will ever be able, or even ought to wish, to ignore your body. It is *you* as much as your soul is, and God is not going to save you in defiance or even in disregard of your nature, but in and through it.

ii. The body has several instincts in it, chiefly that of self-preservation, which leads you to eat or drink or to defend yourself; of self-extension, which leads you to get property; and of self-reproduction, which leads up to the sexual act between man and woman. All these instincts can be kept in order and subordinated to right reason, or, allowed to get the upper hand, to enslave you, to make you their victim, as when the first

ends by making you a glutton, or a drunkard, or a man of uncontrolled temper; the second, a kleptomaniac; the third, a sexual maniac. All the same, not one of them is bad in itself. Men are very apt to think that their sexual instinct *is* bad in itself, and that if they were perfectly good they would not be aware that they had any such thing. It is true that Adam before the Fall did not experience any trouble with this instinct or with any other; they were all perfectly obedient to his reason. But this was a special "preternatural" grace given to him by God, and since after his sin it was withdrawn, and since we do not possess it, it does not concern us. Our instincts *are* unruly, and are so in the long run because of Original Sin (for if Adam had not sinned, nor we in him, the grace of "integrity" would not have been withdrawn and we should not suffer from "concupiscence," which means the unreasonable urgency of *any* instinct): but the sexual instinct *is* not Original Sin nor yet actual sin. In itself, it is morally neutral. It is also true that by mismanaging myself, I can, as I said, let any one instinct get too strong compared to the rest: but that still does not make it bad in itself. For instance, even if by habitually drinking too much, I

develop a craving for drink, it still does not follow that it is a sin to feel thirsty. The instinct for amusement, for social life, for self-defence, all may be over-developed, and even when they are not, may be a nuisance at any given moment, as when I very much want to spend the time talking when I know I ought to be working. But again, it does not follow that they are bad in themselves. In fact, they are part of the equipment of human nature, and a man apparently *without* any combative, social or sexual instinct would be the one to make one feel anxious: he would, usually, be undeveloped or a cripple in that particular point. Even if you should think that your sexual instinct is unusually strong (which you must not think too easily), it still is not bad in itself, nor should you think of yourself as somehow a "rotter," as I have known many young men to think, and feel miserable about it and wish they had never been born.

iii. But a man will often say: "I suppose I can't help feeling like that sometimes, but still, I *must* be a rotter. I should hate it; whereas I don't. I ought to feel all such things are disgusting, whereas I feel they would be pleasant and, to be candid, left to

myself I should like to do them." No. You feel they would be pleasurable, because they *are* pleasurable. If sexual actions were not pleasurable, no one would want to do them. No amount of virtue demands that you should tell lies or talk nonsense. A man is asked to say: "Such and such an action would be pleasurable if I did it. Of course. But I am not going to do it all the same" (except of course in the proper circumstances, like the marriage-act). Similarly, sugar is sweet. But a doctor will tell a man who has diabetes that he must not eat sugar. The man does not have to pretend to himself that sugar is not sweet, nor even that he does not like sweet things, nor even that he would not like to eat sugar were he allowed to. It is: and he does: and he would. But he says: "Doctor's orders. Though I would like to, I won't." In time, he gets so clear that he is not going to eat it, that for practical purposes he ceases to want to. So, with clear-headed courage, a man says: "I know only too well that I should like to do so and so—it would be a lie if I pretended I wouldn't. But—God's orders, I won't."

iv. Some men are so worried by the attractiveness of women, that they despondently

say to you: "I wish there were *no* women: wouldn't I do better, Father, to have nothing to do with the wretched creatures at all?" That would be a great practical mistake, to start with: it would reduce you to a timorous self-consciousness that would simply create temptations for you. You would become unable to meet or look at a girl without at once thinking of her as a source of temptation; which would be miserably morbid. Then it would be extremely unkind: it would be treating with fear, contempt, or hate, more than half of the human race. And it would be irreverent to God who created women just as He did men. The human race is not constructed in view of a male world only, nor of a female world only, but of a world where men and women are associated, and are meant normally to combine their lives in a loving and respectful marriage. An inclination towards the opposite sex is normal and right; and you should profit by opportunities of innocently meeting girls, and by all parish entertainments especially, where you can associate with them, dances included provided they are properly managed, as Catholic ones presumably are.

Never then confuse yourself by thinking

that somehow, if you were all you should be, you would be as it were body-less: or that your sex instinct is a wicked thing; or that you are expected to trample it out: or that sex-actions ought necessarily to disgust you; or that women are a regrettable necessity, or inferior to man, or that you ought not to be attracted by them. A mistaken mind on these subjects is responsible for innumerable scruples at one end of the scale, and perhaps quite as often, in the long run, for despondency and laxity at the other. In short, speaking generally, you will never get very far by thinking ill of yourself or of other people and trying *not* to face up to self or others or life at large. Even though men have made a considerable mess of things and have multiplied their difficulties enormously, God wishes to make the best and the most of His human creatures and prizes them all very highly. Try therefore to think very highly too about what you are meant to *become*, and practise to be the right thing, rather than avoid being the wrong one. You do not want, really, to have a mind that is *empty* on this or any other subject, but, a mind that is in good order and working freely and not interfering with the will, but providing it with right ideas seen

in the right light. Once you see a true thing in the right light (which means, that you see its pleasingness and attractiveness), you have got a long way towards being able to live according to it, though in spite of the poet it does not follow that we "*needs must* love the highest when we see it." But at least it is extremely improbable that we shall love the highest or anything else if we do not see it, or have only a confused and muddled view of it.

II.

SO far I have tried to make your thoughts clear on certain points as to which the mind is often confused. I want now briefly to show why Thoughts are of such immense importance. It is fatal to say, as some practically do, "Oh well, my thoughts are beyond me. I'm content if I manage to keep my acts in order!"

i. Thoughts are the only things that make you propery human. Why? Because, unless you are thinking, you are doing merely animal acts, acts of the instinct, below the level (accordingly) of praise or blame. If I pass close behind a nervous horse, and he kicks out, I do not call him an immoral horse. Mere instinct, like his, is blind and does not choose. Choice makes an act moral or immoral in the concrete, and Thought enables me to choose. For example, if I have nothing but instinct, and am hungry, and food is accessible, I am bound to make for it and eat it—unless, indeed, some other instinct, like that which

makes an animal detect the presence of poison in food, interferes with the hunger instinct and checks it. If I am hungry, and see a leg of mutton, and have nothing in me but instinct, I cannot help starting to try to eat it. But if I have the power of thought, I can say: "That belongs to Mrs. Brown: she has paid for it: it would be stealing to take it. Also, if I eat it, she will have nothing left for her Sunday dinner, and her husband will give her a black eye. So I must not touch it." Notice, I am just as hungry as before; and the leg of mutton is just as attractive as before. The only new thing that has come into play is a Thought. It is my Thought that has enabled me to check myself, and to choose not to eat even what I want to eat. There may be a struggle within me: I may want to forget all about Mrs. Brown; and often enough you hear men say that they don't want to be reminded of so-and-so—it might interfere with them—make them feel uncomfortable. So they can "put it out of their minds." But the point is, that they recognize how important and powerful thoughts can be. And if I were merely prevented from outside myself from eating the leg of mutton, either by force, because someone held

me back, or, because someone was looking, I should get no credit for having restrained myself. One has to think in one's mind, and then choose freely.

ii. Now I probably cannot help having a certain number of thoughts about sexual things. Do not go and say, at once, that these are "bad" thoughts. Thinking about the subject of sex can be quite legitimate. You are doing so now. It depends on what you *do with* your thoughts, and why. But to start with, as I said, you practically cannot help having such thoughts even when you do not want to. Your mind is a fluid and floating thing, like the sea. Left to itself, the sea remains calm. But if a wind blows upon it, it ripples: and if an earthquake occurs at the bottom of it, again the surface heaves. Similarly, unless you keep your eyes and ears tight shut, which you cannot, sights and sounds of all sorts will strike them, including those that suggest to your mind sensual subjects. You see pictures, posters, people: you hear and cannot help hearing sexual talk. That is like the wind plunging on to the sea. But also, you may have a slight indigestion, or an irritation of the kidneys: that is enough to disturb the flow of

the blood, which will exercise a pressure on certain nerves or organs, and irritate you, so that while usually it is the thought that sends the blood flowing there, and thus creates the irritation, it may be equally well an uneven flow of blood that creates the irritation and so gives rise to the thought, by what is called "association." Anyhow, the point is, thoughts from an inside origin or an outside one are simply sure to arise in an ordinary man's life. Whatever is offered to one's attention, one *has* to think about, if only for a moment.

iii. What ought I to do when such things occur? You have always been taught that you must not *accept* a thought, even for a moment, so as to draw pleasure from it. Sometimes, of course, a man knows that that is exactly what he has done, deliberately. But very often indeed, especially if a man is trying to live as he should, his fluid, tremulous mind responds to the suggested thought so quickly that he really is not sure whether he "yielded" to it, that is, dwelt unnecessarily on it because he was drawing pleasure from it, or in order to draw pleasure. Well, when you go to confession, for heaven's sake spend no time wondering whether you did linger over the thought or not. That simply revives the

thought, and would excite the imagination all over again. Simply say that you have had bad (or more accurately, sexual) thoughts, and accuse yourself of any guilt there may have been in God's eyes. If you think you deliberately took pleasure in them, say so: if you are sure you did, say that. But don't spend time over the actual thoughts, neither when you are preparing for confession, nor at any other time.

iv. "Ah, but if I *can't help* spending time over them? Suppose they simply haunt and obsess me?"

You often hear: "Resist those thoughts: fight against them." That advice is practically useless and generally harmful and most unscientific. The more I tell myself not to think about a thing, the more, obviously, I am keeping my mind upon it. The more I *struggle* against it, the more my imagination gets excited. If I say: "I will not think of onions: I will *not* think of those onions: onions are things I *must* not think about" —why, onions get so stuck in your mind that your very eyes begin to water. Do not think about your "bad" thought—no, not even to pray against it. Say quickly, if you like—"Mary, help me. Jesus, save me," and then

think of *something else*. It is a great advantage to be able to *do* something, and therefore, it is a good thing if you have a hobby you can turn to. But, for example, at night you cannot get up and start carpentering or tinkering with your motor bike. Lucky, then, if you have "intellectual interests"—subjects you *like* thinking about, because those are easy to turn to. But if you haven't, still think about something positive, however absurd—like composing a cricket eleven of the eleven fattest men you know. You will think easily of six; the three next will be difficult to find: the last two, almost impossible. But your "bad" thought will have gone leagues away. If you hate heights, for example, and have a vivid imagination, try thinking you are on the top of a swaying factory chimney, making up your mind whether you prefer to topple down outside it or slither down inside it. Why, my finger-tips get positively damp, as I write, through picturing that! No room for any other emotions of any kind!

v. Finally, train yourself not to *expect* to have bad thoughts. If you are always going about in a panic that you are going to be tempted, you will be. I have known boys in a deplorable condition of nerves over some

quite ordinary thing, like bathing, or having a hot bath by themselves for they had got into the habit of thinking they would be tempted, and ended by supposing that there was a fate about it, and so, giving up. A man can make himself into a dithering idiot by imagining that he is going to be put within an ace of falling simply because he sees or hears so and so. . . Nonsense. Just as a man can let himself get into the dreadful state in which everything *does* suggest "bad" thoughts to him, simply because he has thought of those things over and over again, and has (one would say) carved a sort of channel in his very brain for such thoughts to flow down, so he can by cheerful self-control become able to think about very much what he pleases. In this way a man goes forth into life so much his own master that not only he doesn't intend to be affected by what he sees or hears, but doesn't expect that it will affect him, and so it just doesn't. Of course, this implies full success. Most men are still far from that. But that is the direction in which you must be going. The root of the whole matter is the mind. As your thoughts are, so (almost invariably) will be your behaviour. At least, no man's behaviour

is likely to be bad, unless his thoughts are bad *first*. As we go on, we shall see that your Thoughts are the real You.

Catholics have, besides Our Lady, a great patron for all that concerns purity: St. Aloysius Gonzaga. One of the most remarkable facts about him was that he became able to think of exactly what he pleased. When he wished to turn his mind off any subject, he could do so, and keep it off; and he could think without distraction of anything that he chose, and keep it up so long as he wished. Of course, he could not do this without great practice, nor, I have no doubt, without special help from God. There can be but few men who succeed in getting so extraordinary a control over their thoughts and imagination. Still, you see it can be done. And it is very useful indeed to make a point, on and off during the day, of concentrating your attention on some job or other, your prayers or anything else, and resolving not to allow yourself to be *interrupted* in your mind by thoughts about anything else whatsoever. The moment a rival thought comes up, do not just say: "I will not think of that," but go straight back to your chosen job, and stick to it till you have done what you intended.

III.

HAVING spoken about thoughts, I will now say something about words. First, I want to speak of some current lies, or half-truths, that you will constantly hear. They are usually spoken by non-Catholics, but sometimes (even sincerely) by Catholics too, and may easily puzzle, worry and dishearten a Catholic, especially if he is young and not very experienced.

i. "What is the good of trying to be a freak? Nobody keeps quite chaste."

This is easily dealt with, because it is just untrue. A minority, no doubt, but still, a quite substantial minority, and by no means composed only of Catholics, keeps itself quite as it should, and comes to marriage, or even lives out its whole life (since not all marry) as well-behaved as ever a man could wish his bride to have been. A still large minority exists of men who have done wrong once, perhaps, but never again. Or who have had a bad period, but have recovered, perhaps

quite soon. Nothing has astonished me more than how men belonging to what are sometimes called the "uneducated classes" often manage themselves far better than the educated; and, how they get over their bad period, if they have one, very young. I have often had it said to me: "Them things don't worry me. I got over them things when I was about sixteen. I never done it since I learned sense." I quote this exactly as it has more than a few times been said to me. It shows that those lads had a sound nature, and that life had schooled them well.

ii. "You don't understand what life *is*, till you've tried so and so. You're green. You aren't a proper man yet. Give me a man who has had experience, and *then* he can talk if he wants to." This is a galling thing to have said to one. No man likes to feel a fool in life, and inexperienced. And it is quite true that keeping one's self chaste involves the sacrifice of one experience. Of *one* experience. But it means the gaining of a *better* experience. If I am never ill, I miss the (maybe very valuable) experience of feeling ill. All the same it is better to experience good health! Sexual pleasure is a short sharp shock to the nerves, and has

often a bad reaction after it, especially in the conscience. But to control yourself carries with it the experience of self-possession, that is, of being fully a man; and this is enduring, constructive, and pervades the "self" and is not in the nerves merely. It brings no swing-back, but goes on increasing. It is a glow, not a flash; it is like the good all-through-you warmth after exercise, not like suddenly being scorched! And you have the experience of happiness, not of mere pleasure. So if you are told: "You are an inexperienced boy: don't dare to talk among *men*," *you* have the right to answer: "I agree that I have sacrificed an experience, but I have also gained one. And so have you. But the one I have gained is a better one than the one you have. I have got nearer to manhood, you, to animal-hood."

iii. "But a certain amount of indulgence is good for you!" One of the miseries of the war was, that so many older men used at first to say that to younger soldiers. They spoke of "sexual starvation" and even recommended careful sexual self-indulgence to quiet the nerves and relax the strain, say, of trench warfare. And a number of men, who feel restless, think they will be all right if

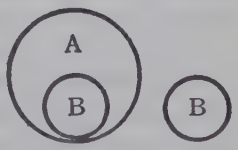
they take this means of calming themselves. Even, some men imagine that if they do not use the sexual faculty, it will somehow be spoilt, or withered, and they will become impotent. This last idea, I may say, is just nonsense, as absurd as the enormously widespread myth that a man will cure his venereal disease if he can have intercourse with a virgin. What the origin of this tale is, heaven knows! but it must have occasioned incalculable disaster.

Now, first, a man is *never* the worse for self-control. All good medical opinion is unanimous, now, about that. Opposite views may have been sincerely held, once: but I think that three-quarters of the bad advice mentioned was given because the giver wanted to be thought a "sport," or even, to find an excuse for his own behaviour. To yield does, of course, quiet a man down for the moment, but that is a short-sighted policy as well as an immoral one, for the effect does not last. Such a system is like drug-taking: you need larger doses, more and more often; they produce less and less effect, and worse reactions; and they stupefy you for half of the rest of life. The proper way for a human creature to deal with itself is, as I said, to

use fully human means, namely, the intelligence and the will, and not merely to try to sate the emotions and to stun the nerves. But it is very important indeed to see clearly, here, the difference between suppression and self-control. I must not allow anyone to suggest to me that by trying to live chaste I am trampling out my instincts, trying to crush human nature out of myself. I *cannot* do that, to start with: nor does God, who made me and my nature, wish me to. Unintelligent, tyrannical denial of my instincts does do me harm: it exasperates the nerves, and I probably break out in another way. Take a sailor, who wants to get on shore and find a woman, and who is forcibly prevented, say, by spraining his ankle. *He* is being suppressed, and very likely his nerves get desperate, and it may be the ship's boy who suffers. But the man who for a clearly seen reason freely governs himself, is not trampling on a good thing in himself, but gladly subordinating it to a *better* thing that he wants *more*, just as a man will freely and easily abstain from a heavy meal before a football match in which he wants to shine, however hearty be his appetite. He would call anyone a fool who said: "You are cruelly tram-

pling on your instinct for beef and beer." I don't deny that there are moments when a man will need to do himself some violence; but I am speaking of the normal man at normal times, and saying that the *policy* of self-indulgence is a bad one, and that the generalization that self-control does harm, is a lie.

iv. This answers the last remark you are constantly hearing: "Well—after all, it's natural!" I suppose no formula is more often used about anything than this is about this topic. It is a half-truth, and that is why it sounds so plausible. In a man, such actions, uncontrolled, are *partly* natural: they correspond to instinct. But if they are duly controlled, they are fully natural, for then they correspond to instinct *and* to reason. I am like this—B is the instinct part of me, which I share with animals: A is the reasoning, controlling part of me, which they do not possess. B-actions are natural so far as they go: they go all the way in an animal, but part of the way only in me. If I cut out the A part of my activity, I am halving my nature: in fact,



I am cutting out the very part that makes me human. Therefore, to let myself go to instinct is not being humanly-natural, while to possess instinct and control it, is.

v. I add one more consideration, given by more "high-brow" people—it is a double one: "There is supply and demand, in these matters. The male part of the population *demands* a certain amount of indulgence, and therefore of women willing to provide the opportunity for it; and, there is a class of women temperamentally fitted for that and for nothing else. Therefore, the State ought to regulate and license prostitution." Here I shall be very brief. Except in very special circles, such as the army, where the licensing of houses has in some cases diminished illness (largely, I think, because it has made men realize how serious illnes is, and not because it has made them think that now they can safely go with women: I think that Kitchener's arrangements in India did more to "suggest" that men had better not go there at all, than that they could go there harmlessly), well, except in rare cases, State regulation of vice has *not* diminished illness. But quite apart from the complete condemnation of the wretched women enclosed there

(which is perfectly unjustifiable and an outrage upon human nature, let alone religiously indefensible), the whole topic of supply and demand is badly stated. The supply does *not* on the whole consist of women who are adapted to that trade and to nothing else, but of women on the whole who are slightly sub-normal and of whom men have taken advantage and who have been *put* where they are and cannot get free again. Perhaps not one in a thousand prostitutes chooses that sort of life because it really corresponds to something in her psychological make-up. Very few *need* have settled down to it, and nearly all of them hate it. The physical exhaustion is appalling; the mental frights and anxieties are so too; illness is almost a certainty; and the finish of such lives is usually terribly sad, lonely, and ugly, and very often it is suicide. As for the demand, that too is over-stated. No doubt men have the instinct we have spoken of, but if only it and they were let alone, we should cease to hear much, if anything, of a "demand." Especially in so-called civilized centres, the general suggestion of literature, art, and the cinema is always vaguely and sometimes definitely sexual; it is made almost impossible for men to keep

their minds off the subject. And very often it is deliberately fostered as a money-making system. Do not for a moment imagine that theatre or music-hall managers do not, in very many cases, know perfectly what they are doing. They *engineer* excitement. I could quote instances of men owning up quite frankly to this. They increased the suggestion deliberately, in order to get custom. Very often chorus girls are extremely humiliated by the costumes they are made to wear. I know a lady who was explicitly offered a very large sum for a novel if she would make it rather more sexually exciting than her previous one, which had all the qualities needed to ensure a large sale save that one. She refused, and sacrificed a very large sum. The whole thing is a literally very vicious circle. Men are made artificially excited; they then "demand" satisfaction: the prostitute class is fostered, and it, in its turn, excites more men. You have a tremendous responsibility, even as citizens. Not by one finger's weight must you add pressure to the immense push which drives men and women towards sin, disease, and misery. Moreover, you may be thoroughly scared, if you like, by the thought that *if* the prostitute class is diminishing, as statistics

seem to show, that is not in the least because people are getting more sane and self-controlled, but because more and more men and especially girls are learning to discard principles, and also how to do things safely, and the "amateur" is replacing the need for the professional. All the same, I would add a warning here. It is very often the "amateur" who does *not* know how to do things safely; who does not even know that she is ill; and who very easily passes on disease. Few shocks can be worse than a young man's who discovers that he has caught an illness from such an one. And I am far from deprecating all State-compulsion in these matters, especially that of illness, or of prostitution. We have a minimum of regulation; other lands have more, *e.g.*, they confine all prostitutes to one quarter of the city. Those then who go there *have* to *go*, and know what they are going for. But it is wrong so to certificate and enclose a prostitute as to make it morally impossible for her ever to be anything else. No shop should be allowed to exhibit or advertise sex-drugs or literature.

Having said this much about the lies that go round, I want to finish what need be said about talk.

i. I want here to be neither too lax nor too rigid. To start with, can you help hearing a certain amount of talk? No. Need you *always* suppose that those who use it are committing mortal sins, and are immoral? No. It is a puzzling fact, but one that everyone must recognize, that often (not always) those who talk most, do least, or anyways that there is but little, if any, proportion between talk and behaviour. Perhaps it is a sort of safety valve. Often it is a sort of smoke-screen—people put up any amount of bluff in order to keep their quite personal views, and still more their personal innocence of behaviour, secret and to themselves. Unfortunately, there are circles in which to be considered innocent is to be considered absurd, and men get so chaffed, and indeed so deliberately tempted by conscienceless companions, that they may simply be unable (or think sincerely they will be unable) to hold out. Hence out of self-defence they talk in such a way as, without actually telling lies, and saying they have done so and so, to allow others to assume that they have, and to let them alone. I cannot pretend it is the best way of acting, and of course I should not dream of advising it, but it may not be altogether bad, at least in in-

tention, and it helps one when one is inclined to judge others. Nor is it the same thing, at all, as boasting. A man will very often exaggerate enormously his faults, *e.g.*, with women, because these carry a sort of glory with them—though why they should, I don't know: to do wrong is the easiest thing in the world: to do right in difficult circumstances *is* a triumph and would be worth boasting about if anything were, which it isn't—but they will hush up altogether inglorious faults, like self-abuse, which has no conventional splendour about it. So you may regularly deduct seventy-five per cent from what a man says when he is boasting. Finally, there are robust temperaments whose owners can and do tell stories of a jovially indecent sort, while their behaviour cannot have a word said against it: they can hear and relate and forget such tales, even though they roar with laughter at them. I am not approving of this; but it happens; and the point is that you need not lose heart and think that the jolliest fellows are badly behaved, simply because they tell such stories. It is, in fact, quite a common saying that it is the silent and easily shocked man who has to be suspected.

ii. When men talk like that, ought you to

try to stop them? It all depends. You have to judge the circumstances. Probably you would do more harm than good. In a mixed company, where you are not obviously the older, or in control, you could do little that was useful. If you *are* in control, you certainly may be able to insist—"None of that!" But suppose you can't actually stop it, do you do wrong if you laugh at it? I cannot say—"*Yes*, always." For there are laughs and laughs. One is obviously approving, and others are not. A laugh may be quite the best way to change the subject. If by a glum face you irritate the story-teller, he will probably go on from one story to another, merely to irritate you in return, especially if he is a man of the sort I have mentioned, who does not see why he should be held to behave badly merely because he tells a yarn. Moreover, a laugh can clear the air. A snigger or a nasty chuckle doesn't. There is what I call a dry and healthy atmosphere, and a moist and germful one. In the former, to put it a little differently, stories blow off you like so much tobacco-ash; in the latter, they work into the fibre of the mind like tar. You will soon know whether a man is telling a yarn, ready to laugh, and having laughed, to pass

at once to any other topic, or, whether he is licking his lips over what he has said and wishing that you should do likewise. The sooner that sort of atmosphere is dispelled, the better. There is even a polite and most quelling laugh that can be used, more "drying" than any verbal snub. As for knowing which sort of atmosphere exists, you really must use your common sense. There are no rules. But one thing may well make you look out! That is, when you notice that a man begins to take it for granted that he never need mind what sort of yarn he tells *you*. It is one thing to find yourself in a group where, without particular attention to you, yarns are being told, and quite another when a man *chooses* you as a fit person to tell such a yarn to.

iii. Neither here nor anywhere must you pursue a policy of *mere* funk. Your mind *ought* to be so healthy that it rejects all such germs. You may be saying: "Yes—I am like that! Such things don't hurt *me*!" But don't be too sure. One may suddenly be caught napping. The germ has worked its way in and a man wakes up to find he has acquired a haunting, disturbing memory or thought. But even if immune, one ought to

resolve never to *contribute* to such conversations. Not only, I think, because they infallibly coarsen one a little, but also because they are so inappropriate in a Catholic especially, as we shall see. But, even more, for the sake of other people one should not add to the current of sexual talk around us. First, people do not know that you are so innocent and robust-minded as all that! They are too apt to think—and even like to think—that as a man talks, so he acts. They say: "There! everyone is alike! Catholics or not, everyone is tarred with the same brush." Even, "There's a man who goes to his confession and his communion, and yet he tells yarns like that. If he's not a hypocrite, anyway Catholics must be a pretty lax lot." Either as I said, he is relieved to find that everyone's the same, for then he reproaches himself the less; or, he may be very sorry, and have hoped that Catholics anyway were "different." But more important still, you never quite know to whom you are talking. Others may be far more inflammable than you are. In your audience there may be a man who is finding self-control very difficult, or who is trying to reform, or who has a far more vivid imagination than you have. What you say may not

matter to *you*, but may be just what's needed to make it impossible for him to hold out any longer. It may just apply the match—it may just give him the shove that is too much for him. If you say: "Well, that's weak of him," so no doubt it is: but what about it? not everyone is strong. Obviously the weak people are just the ones to trouble about. The strong ones can take care of themselves. "Well, but I can't be always on the look-out for other people's weaknesses. I can't govern my life with regard to everyone else's welfare—especially when it's only a possibility that he's weak." Well, I confess that that *is* exactly what a Christian may be expected to do. . . No. Try (1) not to let anyone leave your society thinking more cheaply of Catholics, and (2) to help the weak rather than to hurt them. No matter that a man does not advertise his weakness! That is just it! In a mixed society you don't know who is weak and who isn't. I have seen a man appalled, even almost physically sick, when I told him that *he* was the one whose talk had (without his guessing it) sent a hitherto innocent lad to a brothel.

Finally, do not feel a hypocrite if you do not relate your own misdoings publicly. (i)

You are not bound to give yourself away. And (ii) such a relation may make listeners feel (a) envious of you; and (b) despondent. "If he can't manage it, how can *I* expect to? X [*i.e.*, yourself] was a bit of a hero to me. If he has failed, I may as well not try." If you feel: "I am being made a hero of, and don't deserve it, if all were known," that is part of your penance. It won't help your worshipper to know that you are as weak as he is, or fail as often as he does. Certainly you will feel ashamed; but that is a good experience and will help *you* to do better. But the Church herself has understood that public confession is not on the whole a good thing; and the experience of the modern movement called "The Groups" has, without any doubt whatsoever, proved that it is on the whole a bad thing. Such confessions on the whole stimulate, not only curiosity, but imitation; and they give rise, in an appreciable number of occasions, even to blackmail. Do not exhibit your lower self, even out of sympathy. It does not help.

IV.

HAVING spoken of thoughts and words, less remains to be said about acts. It is quite unnecessary to enter into details: but if we see *why* wrong acts are committed, we shall have advanced nearly all the way towards seeing how best they are avoided. Any wrong act may be committed in a moment of blinding passion, or again, with cool deliberation. But no one dreams of suggesting that most wrong sexual acts are committed in either of these two ways. Blinding passion is rare enough, especially among Englishmen: and few again are coldly calculated. It may be said that all-but-all such acts (save those concerning birth-restriction) are committed in neither of these two ways, but because a man is in a certain mood. By a mood I here understand that curious condition in which a man is in the main emotional but not only so. It is, as they say, a sort of "all-over-ish" feeling, in which a man knows what he is doing, and could, strictly

speaking, control himself, but on the whole is likely not to do so. He thinks in a way corresponding to the mood, or cannot think properly at all, or still more likely perceives no cogency in what he thinks—"I know it's wrong, but I can't *see* it is." It is far easier to explain myself by registering the more important moods.

i. A large proportion of men will tell you that they would never have done so and so if they hadn't had a certain amount of drink. They were—not drunk, but exhilarated, above themselves, totally disinclined to observe rules and ready to "let it all rip." (I omit the silly variety of this, commoner far among non-Catholics than Catholics, when men say: "This is a Special Occasion—Boat Race night; Grand National; Cup Tie. I reckon it's *up* to a man to get drunk on a night like this, and if other things happen, well, once in a way it can't do much harm." Obviously, if a thing is wrong in itself, it can make no difference what day it occurs on.) All the same, the exhilarated mood still leaves a fair amount of strength in the man who experiences it. He may even get more obstinate; and though, for example, he would normally just disregard a prostitute, when "above him-

self" he may reject her advances with insult.

ii. Far more dangerous is the "fed-up" mood. I do not mean sheer despondency, for this damps a man down so completely that the sexual instinct is deadened along with all the rest. But if, for example, a young man living alone in a great city finds himself—he doesn't know why—"fed-up" with life in general, sick of his books, his room, even his friends, and all his ordinary occupations and interests (if any), and if (as for instance on a Sunday night) there seems nothing in particular to do, *then* there is practically nothing left in him but instinct. He has neither clear ideas nor strong motives, and he is all but automatic. Then either he is aware that a severe shock to the nerves, such as sexual pleasure can give him, is the only thing able to make him "feel alive," and he takes the chances offered, or, he just slips into wrong if a solicitation comes, for there really is nothing in him to resist it with.

iii. Allied to this is the exasperated mood, when the insipidity of all ordinary occupations and ideals produces an active distaste for them, and generates a reckless desire to defy the usual behaviour: there is a surly and even an angry and most gloomy lust that cor-

responds to this. Both these varieties of the "fed-up" mood may result from the sense of being thought "green" to which I have already alluded. I have known lads so cruelly chaffed about their innocence that they have actually felt life unbearable, and gone up to their rooms and cried. They then may get defiant, and go and do what they were egged on to doing—and then, I may say, there will always be a sort of regret at the back of the minds of their tormentors: few men are such cads that they are not sorry to have forced a man to spoil a good record—or, they may indeed be able to resist the relatively difficult and unaccustomed temptation to go and find a woman, and relapse into solitary actions which are the constant refuge of the shy, the lonely and the despondent.

(I wish here to make a parenthesis about solitary actions. I here assume that they are habitual, say, twice a week or more. If they are rare, or at quite erratic intervals, with a month or more between them, I consider the temptation is not really a "psychological" affair, and you must just cope with it as you would with any recurrent but rare temptation. The thing is difficult when it is *habitual*. First, do not imagine you are going to get the better

of it merely by prayer, merely by physical means (like cold water baths a.m.), or merely by rebuke, even self-rebuke. You need a special mental *training*. The first thing is negative—you must *not* entertain certain ideas about yourself. To start with do not think you are the only man in the world thus worried. As I said, this fault is, conventionally, not owned up to. Therefore no one save a priest is likely to know how common it is. It may be commoner in men who abstain from women, by principle, fear, or mere lack of desire. It is also quite common in married men living away from their wives. When I say "common," I obviously don't mean that most do it: but that among sexual faults it is not a rare exception in the adult. Get well out of your head, then, the idea that you are a sort of hideous freak, who should be instantly disgraced were your trouble known. Again, do not imagine that this habit will send you to the madhouse. It will certainly try your nervous system, if you persevere in it; but the fact that many lunatics in madhouses cannot control this instinct, does not prove that because they could not control it they became mad. *Not* to control one's self may imply a certain weakness of general con-

trol, but that is a thing that can, in ninety-nine cases out of one hundred, be acquired. Frightful mental suffering may be caused to boys by suggesting to them that because they cannot stop solitary actions, at the time, they are booked for an ultimate madhouse cell. No such thing. Finally, never think, "There is a fate about it: every time I take a hot bath, I *must* do this; or, if I can't go to sleep at once, I am *sure* to!" The moment you think that sort of thing, you will do it. But you can be got out of thinking it.

Finally, do not struggle with yourself, and keep saying, "I *won't* do this," and clench your fists and frown and screw your face up. The formula to use to yourself is not: "I *won't* do this," but, "I am not going to do this." Quite quietly. Quite at your ease. Now listen. You have to build up your general will and character, quite from the bottom upwards. Certainly it is useful to train your bodily life in all ways: for example, to get up when you are called, to take a bath even when it is coldish, to play games, to encourage yourself to talk when you are shy, and so on. Everything that involves your taking a quiet decision strengthens your will all through. And anything that turns your attention out-

wards, and off yourself, and un-isolates you, is good and has a direct result on such actions. Next, accustom yourself, even when you have failed, to look forward and *never back*. Make your act of contrition quickly and without trying to excite yourself to sorrow by reflecting on the particular thing you have done, and in short never spend any time thinking about this subject for any reason whatsoever, even pious. Do not say to yourself that because you have fought for a week and have failed on the eighth day, therefore the whole week of good effort has been ruined by one day's disaster. It appears to me that psychologically speaking you are seven to the good. Anyhow, you have done more to build up your character, by your hard fight, than to pull it down, by your momentary fall. Remember that underneath acts of sin, is the character. The confessional does not profess to create character, and absolution has nothing directly to do with habits. Of course a good confession has all sorts of good results, quite apart from the supernatural ones; but strictly speaking it does not exist to deal with character, but with sins. It does not release one from the duty of forming one's self. In short, to refuse to drill one's self,

trusting to absolution to "put you back" where you were, at the scratch line of innocence, so to speak, is nonsense. You have been altering yourself every moment of your life, letting yourself go to pieces if you have slacked, toughening yourself if you have worked hard. Absolution does not correct a history of slackness, and one sin does not destroy a period of character-formation. If I were you, I should of course resolve with your will, aided by God's grace, "never more to offend" Him: but if you have a really frequent habit, I should not use your imagination over a space of more than a day or two. Foresee the next three days, for example, and tell yourself, if it is Monday, that you are going to keep all right till Thursday. That feels manageable, while an indefinite "never," "always," is quite beyond the grasp of the imagination, just as "a million million" is. It means nothing. In practice, you don't believe in it. When you say: "I will never offend Thee again," you *feel* in the back of your mind, "All the same, I'm sure I shall." But you needn't feel that about three days, or two. "I know I can hold out for *that*." When they have passed by, forget them. Do not say: "I shall hold out for a fourth, a

fifth, a sixth," but begin again: "I am going to hold out for three days." Then don't add up, and say, "I have now held out for twenty days—I don't believe I can keep it up." Yes, you can, if you look forward and never back. Obviously, you ought to use supernatural means—prayer and Communion: but even in your prayers don't spend time thinking over the thing you want NOT to do, but over what you DO want to do, namely, pleasing Our Lord.

I think it is here that almost more than anywhere one meets with the tragedy of human nature—I mean, that men will say to one, "It isn't as if I want to do these things: I hate them: I hate myself before, during, and after. But I get so simply desperate: I can't go to sleep; I can't think; I'm too tired or worried to concentrate on a book if I try to read. So I take the short way out and feel pretty hopeless about it." Well, that is true. I am very sorry for you, and don't feel in the least inclined to be severe, still less, contemptuous. I suppose that a sin may, owing to circumstances so dwindle in "malice," I mean, have so little bad will about it, that it may in fact and in God's eyes not be a sin at all. To commit a mortal sin you have not

only to do what you hold seriously wrong, but to know what you are doing, and to be sufficiently free to stop yourself. Well, I suppose in such circumstances a man knows what he is doing, and that is just where his sense of desperation comes in: he can't help doing it in spite of everything. Now God may be able to see that you in fact cannot help yourself. The will may be really unable to act, just as it has no time to act in moments of sudden overmastering passion. But on the whole, I should be very careful not to let yourself down too easy. Leave the easiness to God and to His priest. I mean, should you do a wrong act, be simply and sincerely sorry for it as it is in God's eyes, and confess it also quite simply, as an act you are not sure about, if you like, and start off again, but above all, never despairingly. But, of course, it is better to conquer the inclination. Now how? Well, I expect that in any case it will be pretty difficult at first. I cannot possibly promise you an easy job. But it is extraordinary how soon it becomes much *easier*. To start with, you begin to *expect* that you will quite probably succeed, and by encouraging that sense of peaceful optimism—"I am not going to do it"—you will sleep much

sooner than if you are practically certain you never will sleep till you have done it. Then I think that if you have the energy—and a putting forth of energy always cheers a man, somehow—you might in cases of real necessity get up and do physical jerks till you simply ache. That diffuses both nervous tension, so to say, and the flow of blood. It takes all the pressure off that particular part of your body. Then wash, towel yourself briskly, and if possible laugh. I shouldn't do too much reading. You want to sleep if possible, and not to fill your mind *unnecessarily*. It *may* be helpful to divert your thoughts by reading, but I think it is better as a rule to do something muscular. In short: you need to blow off steam, and you can best do that by not too violent but pretty forceful exercise.

Never, at such times, try to think the matter out, and to find a reason for "seeing" that the thing is wrong—so wrong that I must not do so and so "even once," not even to send myself to sleep when I simply *have* to get up early to work to-morrow, nor even in view of the fact that nature will probably produce the same effect automatically after an hour or two. All the natural motives and reasons mentioned above hold good, but you will not

be able to "see" one of them *at such times.* There are others quite as valuable—such as, that it is most dangerous to risk starting a habit. But you will feel—"Well, I *will* risk it." Or, "Only this once—this is the last time. . ." The really deep reason is, that one must never exercise an act for an *end* for which nature did not intend it. But suppose, even, that this does not seem to you too abstract and bloodless an argument ever to carry conviction, you could argue against it by saying that the Church allows intercourse between husband and wife even though the conception of a child be not intended or even possible; and, that though nourishment is the main object of eating, I can eat just for pleasure without doing wrong. The chief answer to this is, that when there is an action into which the element of pleasure enters, it is always dangerous to split off, so to say, the pleasure from the main purpose, and to make pleasure your immediate and only end (and to escape from pain is only another version of doing this). For pleasure is never an end in itself, but goes along with the well-being produced by an act that has achieved some substantial vital result. Pleasure is the bloom on the fruit, not the fruit itself.

The only plan is, to prepare so far as possible against such difficult hours, and *in* them, never to argue. A Catholic is wise to confine his arguing to calm moments, and in agitated ones just to rise courageously towards the doctrine and ideals of his Faith. These are, that God made me, preserves me and calls me to a definite end, in-dwells me because of His presence everywhere, and especially because of the grace of my baptism and confirmation, which makes the Holy Spirit to live within me in a special way, and to seek to inspire my thoughts and control my impulses. I have the *right* to ask for His sufficient and more than sufficient help. And finally, Our Lord is united to me not only by the fleeting moments of Sacramental Communion, but by Grace *all the time,* unless I choose to expel Him: no marriage bond is so close; no love so tender, strong and pure. My physical and mental purity has to be all the time the reflection and symbol of this Union. So in hours of extreme stress, do not argue, but just say, "God helping me, I will not do wrong, but I *will* try to please Him." And in proportion as you have prepared for such hours, along the lines of this book, you will find it rela-

tively easy to keep off the wrong, and do the right.)

iv. Finally, there is what I am forced to call the "melting" or romantic mood. Englishmen hate to be told they are sentimental. But they are. Even to-day, when girls, for example, seem so hard, and when young men, just engaged, instead of raving about their fiancée tell you that she "isn't a bad kid on the whole," sentiment catches the Englishman unawares. Herein he is unlike, usually, the Latin—the Frenchman, Italian, Spaniard. (I acknowledge that just in proportion as the old sort of education dwindles, and feeling replaces the intelligence, Latins too will probably become sentimental, as indeed one sees in France—hardly at all in Spain.) In a passionate man, one idea as it were catches fire, blazes up, and he cannot attend to anything else. He is devoured by it. Sentimentalism is a sort of moist mist of the mind: emotion steals up and pervades everything: it smudges out the clean edges of every idea alike. Neither, then, is the passionate man nor the sentimental man fully master of himself. The latter, in suitable circumstances—oh, a July evening: summer moon: honeysuckle: nightingale (if nightingales sing in

July: anyway, you see the sort of thing)—will as it were melt within himself: he flows away into a sea of sweetness, and hardly knows what he is doing till it is done. The passionate man, under the fierce sudden kick of instinct, crashes head over heels into the action: the sentimental man finds himself settling down into a quicksand where there should be solid rock of will: and the mind has become a mist. Once more, a sense of humour is an excellent thing to dry all this moisture up.

Remember then that moods, whether they concern sex or not, should be at all costs *not* yielded to in any part of a man's life. If you catch yourself sulking, fidgety, crotchety, childish, learn to pull up quick. To resist moods, and to do the opposite of what they suggest, is a very healthy form of self-conquest and hurts no one.

V.

YOU will see by now that what you absolutely need in life is a truth clearly seen, which will serve you for a principle—something that you hold certainly true—indisputable—beyond criticism. But even the seen truth is not enough unless it allures one—impels one—serves as a motive: and you want motives so strong as to be stronger than all the calls of immediate pleasure or relief.

I will say in parenthesis that in the rush and fatigue of life, every truth is apt to get obscured, and every motive weakened. I see arguments to this side and to that, and I am tugged this way and that, and amongst it all, my mind is easily confused and my will slackened. It is then almost necessary for me to take a time off, in which I can refresh my mind—see things clearly, in proportion, and in perspective; and, give new life to my will—acquire new energy. I scarcely see how this can be done save in a Retreat. But here

I will simply say that Retreats, even quite short ones, are incredibly useful to practically everyone, and I wish that the whole of England were periodically put into one. But I cannot argue that here.

Now here are three sets of motives—a natural one and a supernatural one side by side in each case.

i. The first consideration is this simple one —Many men are at least helped to maintain their good resolutions by fear of disease. This is not a motive, experience proves, that holds good for long at a time, especially once a man has taken risks and has come off lucky. Still, if you really have a horror of bodily filth, and of running the danger of seeing your wretched limbs putrefy while they yet live, you will be helped by fear of venereal disease. I really think one might not do a bad turn to many a young man, by taking him to see—and to smell—rotting venereal patients in a Lock hospital. Now alongside of that you must train yourself to set, and to contemplate, the thought that Sin is a worse corruption of the soul than any venereal disease is of the body. To start with, an act of sin does not necessarily destroy the body: but sin always injects poison into the soul and

slays out of you your spiritual life. You simply must not allow yourself to think that this is high-flown language, and that I do not mean what I say. The difference between human and divine things is always that the divine one is *more* real than the human, and the deadly results of sin altogether outstrip in kind those of physical illness or accident. God in His goodness *orders* us not to do ourselves the frightful spiritual damage of sin: in His goodness too He reveals what the consequences will be if we sin and do not, by contrition and confession, get cured: so that God's veto upon sin and the doctrine of hell itself are but new proofs of God's love for our soul and His wish for our eternal welfare.

ii. Next, many a man refrains at least for a while from vice because of the thought of his mother and his sisters—but especially his mother. I have known one quite incredible example of that—a man who, from the backwoods, had been in military training at Melbourne, Cairo and Alexandria, Marseilles, and London, and had had every chance of and incentive to wrong-doing, and not once had he offended. He insisted that he had always said to himself, What would my mother say if she saw me doing so and so? Alongside of

that, you ought to set your belief in your Immaculate Mother, Mary. Our Lord, dying, gave us to her as her sons, and you may be sure that Mary never shuts her eyes towards us, her children. The more we need her, the more she is present and attentive to help us. But we never need her so much as we do in our hours of sin. Therefore we, as it were, force her to see us, to keep her pure eyes upon us, precisely when we are doing wrong. A man as it were forces Mary into the brothel with him: he forces her to listen to his sly talk, to catch the disgusting leer in his eye, to stand at the side of her son reducing himself to the level of brute animals. Pray hard that you may never act thus by your Mother Mary, who is God's Virgin Mother too.

iii. The last thought is this: A man often tries hard to keep himself in order for the sake of the girl he is engaged to marry, or, the girl he hopes to meet some day. He thinks it would be outrageous to ask so much from her, and nothing from himself.

Yet here I find I must make another parenthesis. At times even a well-behaved man may ask himself—"Is there not after all one law for the man, and another for the woman?" Can so much be asked from him, as from her?

This is the truth—There is one ideal for the whole human race, male or female, namely, the purity of Christ. This issues into a law of life—be I man or woman, I must do nothing that can violate that purity in me, which must be in the image and likeness of His. Hence, ideal and "law" are identical for all. But at present conditions are not the same for all, though they are changing rapidly but can never change quite all the way. It is still easier for a man to go wrong than for a girl; and, the consequences, physically and I think psychically, are greater in her than in him. After all, to have acted sexually involves an actual bodily change in her, even if the consequences, conception and birth, be interfered with. There is no such bodily alteration in a man. But what I would like to get right out of your heads, if it is even a little way in, is, that men simply *must* do a certain amount of "wrong," and so, that there must be a class in readiness to satisfy their needs; while (as I said above) other people argue, similarly, that there is a certain class of woman who is simply prostitute by temperament, and that you cannot possibly stop them, and that in short, both for society's sake, such women ought to be secluded, medically attended to,

and rendered safe and able to be licensed for such men as need them. In this way, it is argued, men will get what they need, and run no risk, and such girls will be given the only job they are capable of, and society will benefit again. I have already practically dealt with this on page 36: I recall what I said there, namely, that there is *no* "class" of predestined prostitutes, and if men do what they shouldn't so often, that is *not* because of an irresistible male quality, but because (nearly always) men are *suggested* into it, both by material solicitation, like pictures or films, or by mental ones, like (precisely) this one, namely, that they can't help themselves. If you want a good motive for a job in life, here is one—study how to correct, even the least little bit, the bad conditions of our society—bad housing, bad wages, bad ideas. Then you will help your own mind, and that perhaps of hundreds of your fellow-men. Meanwhile, you are right in having a high ideal of the girl you hope to marry, and of that most beautiful thing that Love is, or can be, and of the true union of lives and hearts that a perfect married life should imply. Now listen—No such union, no such love, can even begin to compare with the love of Jesus

Christ for your soul, and the union He brings about within your soul by Holy Communion.

Boys and young men are quite able to appreciate spiritual and even "mystical" ideas—more so, perhaps, than those who have become middle-aged and settled down to their habits and given up dreaming dreams or seeing visions! It is easier for those who are beginning life to see—half in mist, yet truthfully—what God Himself is *aiming at* in this world. So I end by asking you to notice how the whole activity visible in the world is *not* (if you look deep enough) a hostile one, but a uniting one. "It is not good for the man to be alone" (Gen. ii, 18) was written of Adam isolated in Eden; and God is shown providing a "help fit for him"—suited to him. But the principle can be applied to human nature at large—no man is self-sufficient, but needs to join with others for his full well-being. Hence the formation of groups—the family; country; race, all these are good and according to man's true nature and are being misused when made to clash. The more union, then, between friends, relatives, classes, nations, the better. But beyond this, the whole Universe is so made as to become more and more like God's eternal plan

for it, more like His "idea" of it, and so, more like Himself. But there is union between things thus planned and made, and their Maker: you say that the work of art is, first in the mind of the artist, but also, that the artist has put his very soul, his whole self, into his work. And when the "work of art" is not mere stone or paint, but living and conscious as we are, the union is two-sided, and a true *Communion*. God—lest any form of union (one might think!) should be overlooked—willed to take our human nature and unite it so closely with His own as to make thereby a Person, Jesus Christ, true man and true God; and He, in His turn, unites us with Himself by Grace, that we become truly "one" with Him, more "one" than the dearest of lovers can be, who are said to "live *in* one another" as well as for one another! But if you are united with Our Lord, and with God through Him, you are necessarily united with everyone else who is "in one" with Him—His Mother, His saints, and all happy spirits, and indeed, with everything in the world which is, according to its nature, true and good and beautiful. So it will be our aim to bring about the maximum of union between ourselves and all of this, and

with Christ, and with God, and avoid like the pest not only what is obviously contrary to union, like hate, fraud and lying, jealousy; but, what is the caricature and parody of Love, that is the evils we have been speaking of

NOTE I. Some men are troubled, not by what may be called straightforward temptations, but by what the world at large would call "un-natural" ones. It is unnecessary to go into details about this, but it is important to get some right ideas on the subject. First: suppose you are a "straightforward" person, you might remember that the whole of this subject is a very complicated one, and involves extremely delicate psychological considerations which are probably quite unknown to you. So you would be rash in the extreme if you caused (as you easily might do) terrible anguish to a man who suffers thus, by sneering at him or expressing horror and regarding him with contempt and disgust. Nothing whatsoever is settled just by calling a thing "un-natural." Such mental kinks (as they may clumsily be called) do not in the least imply madness, and ought to be treated

with quite as much care and tenderness and science as a child born with a twisted limb, or rather (since I don't believe much in the theory that people are "born" sexually inclined to this or that: the instinct is just neutral like all other instincts and gets specified by prolonged suggestion or sudden shock) as someone who has been brought up on wrong foods or who has had an accident. If you are a man with some such divergence from the ordinary tendencies, you might remember two main facts—first, a consoling one: there is always a reason for everything, and therefore, for an unusual inclination; the reason for yours is probably deep-rooted and quite beyond your awareness and very likely the product of a great number of causes. Each of these would have to be discovered and treated if you were to be quite cured and not merely enabled to control your special temptation just as other men have to control their straightforward ones. So that given the existence in a man of these causes, the effect, namely, a special temptation, is a perfectly natural one *in him*: in the abstract, such a temptation or inclination may be as un-natural and perverse as you please; but in the concrete it cannot but exist. So it is often a

great help to a man just to realize that, and not to go thinking of himself as a mystery, or as an isolated and inexplicable case: alas, I think, and experienced members of the police-force have told me, that our rotten "civilization" is responsible for more and more "exceptions" to the common sexual rule. All the more reason for keeping cheery and sane. The other point is an austere one. Do not let yourself be tricked by absurd people who say that it is a mark of special refinement to be out of the ordinary. You are, they will say, "Greek," or "intellectual." Nonsense. These things are no more Greek than they are Asiatic, or negro; and dockers and tramps provide their fair percentage. Pray; work; mix up with your fellow-men, be unselfish, and try to find a sensible adviser.

. . .

The upshot of all this is, that you may be having a difficult job to live as you should, and there is nothing remarkable in that. So do most men. In your youth especially, you are more likely to experience the difficulties I have been talking of than later, though they never quite stop, so far as most men go. Think as little as possible about them, and

talk of them as little as possible. But if you've got to think or to talk of them, for heaven's sake do it as simply and sensibly as you would about washing your teeth. No one talks by preference about being sick, for example; but if you are telling a doctor that you have fits of being sick, you *tell* him. The same for this subject. What I have said about having your mind clear if your will is to be strong, holds good for all life, especially to-day. There is a wave (I suppose) of real mental dissipation sweeping over Europe and perhaps the world. (But see below, p. 77.) Anything not to think: anything not to take trouble. People dance and dance, and go endlessly to cinemas, after which they cannot so much as remember what films they have seen. They have to receive great doses of sensation before their emotions get going, and then they can't control them. Schoolteachers say that children are as clever as ever, and as good as ever, but that they cannot *concentrate*. Men cannot stick to their jobs; they get "fed up"; they won't "stand" a snub. Their life becomes more and more an affair of machinery and instinct—just the two elements which are not human fully or at all. A Catholic never need succumb to any

of that. He, at any rate, has clear principles and strong motives: but he has to take trouble in order to think the former out, and in order to use the latter for making himself *act*. My final advice is, take yourself in hand *in the whole of your nature*. Try to keep fit, certainly: God takes no pleasure in flabby people. Then try to keep occupied—by all means tinker at a motor bike; but for heaven's sake, don't think a man is meant to be *on the level of his machine*. Use your brain, and read a bit. If your religion is worth anything, it is worth knowing. And as for your general life, you will get more pleasure, even, out of it if you exercise yourself spiritually. Asceticism! That is what that grim word means—just exercise! Judge yourself not by what you have, but by what you are, which, on the whole, you can test not by what you want to *get*, but by what you can do without. And try to serve your fellow-man. That will mean a lot of snubs, opportunities for taking offence which you will *not* take, and unselfishness in general. And practise what we have been saying. And go to Holy Communion. Then life will grow up strong and fine, and you will be fit in yourself, and fit for your fellow-men to consort with, and fit for God. And we

think that not only there is a lovely freshness of innocence that tragically withers under the hot breath of life even when a man keeps himself as he should, but, that this beauty of the soul can be regained, and that a certain radiance of soul can, as it were, replace the delicate bloom that once was on it. It is ridiculous as well as impertinent to describe the chaste as in any way shrivelled folks, dried up in sympathy, and grudging to others what is so often miscalled the "joy" of life. But I doubt whether this happy result is obtained save at the cost of a very real effort after holiness. This means, loving God; and love is not reached without much association, and love shows itself best by service. It has been well said that Fear may bring a man to repentance, but it will not keep him good, nor develop his goodness. But if a young man really does pray to God, which means, speak to Him in his own words and with full sincere simplicity, and if he really tries habitually to is doing something quite consciously in order to please God, then, so royal is the divine Goodness, that the response on God's part will be indeed immense. I think that to such an one, purity will become not only no more frightening, nor melancholy, but lovable,

delightful, taken for granted as the best and happiest thing. For it will mean, not less love, but more; wider freedom; agility; alertness; the full strength of "self-possession" just because there is no barrier more between him and God, who is the fulness of Power, and loves to impart it.

NOTE II. When this book was first written, and even afterwards, this was true. Now things have changed a good deal, and in a direction that should be encouraging to young men who are at present growing up. For some years before the War (which they will not remember) there was a sort of collapse of morals due to various causes which we need not go into, because that time is too far off. During the War, as you can well imagine, there was great moral chaos. After it, by a sort of wild reaction, the same was true; and also, younger men and girls genuinely felt that their elders had made such a mess of things that probably they were wrong all along the line, and that therefore their moral regulations or conventions were wrong, and that the emancipated Youth of the world had better cut loose from all of them. There was,

therefore, a period of, precisely, "looseness." This was found, definitely, not to pay. Too much sexuality; too much drug-taking; too much stealing; far too many suicides. Pretty soon a generation began to appear which said: "We will not be like that. We *must* keep ourselves in shape. We cannot go back to the old reticences and mystifications of our grandparents; but neither will we sink into the slop and the swamp into which our immediate predecessors have slumped." The difficulty was, to discover into *what* "shape" they ought to put themselves. They had forgotten Christianity, or else they misunderstood it. They would not have objected to it because it said: "Control yourself," or even, "Be austere." But they did not see *on what grounds* it had the right to tell them to be, or not-be, to do, or not-do, this or that. The fact remains that there are now an enormous number of young men and women who want to "re-capture" themselves, and to live as morally as any Christian would ask them to. You will not see much about this in the papers, because it is not "good copy"; it is not thrilling, and it is just the opposite to the kind of headline they like, such as: "Volcanic Adolescence": "Youth Bursts the Bounds,"

and so on. Order and Decency never are exciting. In New Zealand, I found newspapers very astonished, and even upset, when I said that modern English youth wanted to behave itself better than it used to. Still, so it is. You, if you read this, have the right to feel yourself in the real current of events, if you are trying, for good reasons, to control yourselves sexually and refuse to admit that you are going to make much of yourself by letting yourselves slip loosely into license. Most of those who now suggest to you that all sexual non-control is an out-of-date slavery, are elderly men, accustomed to misbehaviour, finding themselves progressively incapable of doing much in that line, and envious of young men among whom they would like to imagine themselves, and in short egging them on to do what *they* find they no longer can—or can, only when they pay enough for it to others who would not dream of co-operating were it not for the money. This is a tumble-down degradation. Hence, I think that you are, just at present, having both God on your side, if you try to live clean, and even, the men who count. Men are not much by way of a foundation; but they can help a lot by way of a buttress. And you, even though you are

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helped by being buttressed, can help enormously towards buttressing others. So never be afraid! The Commandment is difficult; but nothing that is easy counts for very much.

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